

Message Text

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64

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9878

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, ASEC, AR

SUBJ: ARMY COMMENCES ANTI-GUERRILLA CAMPAIGN IN TUCUMAN

1. IN RESPONSE TO A PRESIDENTIAL ORDER, THE ARMY HAS BEGUN A CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE GUERRILLA STRONGHOLDS IN TUCUMAN PROVINCE. THE ORDER WAS ANNOUNCED ON FEB 9, THOUGH THE DECREE TO TAKE SUCH ACTION WAS SIGNED AT A CABINET MEETING OVER A WEEK AGO, AND WAS DECIDED ON WHEN ANAYA MET WITH MRS. PERON AT THE MAR DEL PLATA NAVAL BASE ON JAN 28.

2. THE ANTI-GUERRILLA SWEEP IS IN SOUTHWEST TUCUMAN PROVINCE AND BEGAN ON FEB 8 WITH THE ARMY, PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL POLICE TAKING PART. IT IS BEING CONDUCTED UNDER THE UNIFIED COMMAND OF GEN. VILAS OF THE FIFTH INFANTRY BRIGADE.

3. THE AREA HAS BEEN MADE OFF LIMITS TO REPORTERS. THE ONLY INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION THUS FAR IS THE THREE OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUEES WHICH HAVE BEEN ISSUED, AND WHICH ONLY OUTLINE WHY THE ACTION WAS TAKEN. THE INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE THE AFTERNOON BEFORE A PUBLISHING HOLIDAY FOR NEWS-PAPERS, AND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY JAMMING OF RADIO COLONIA IN URUGUAY.

4. COMMENT: THE OPERATION CAN HARDLY COME AS A SURPRISE TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE ERP. IT HAD BEEN RUMORED FOR WEEKS AND WAS EVEN HINTED AT

BY INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA IN A RECENT NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW (SEE BA 822). ONE AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT WHO KNOWS THE AREA OBSERVED THAT WHILE THE MEMBERS OF THE ERP'S RAMON ROSA JIMINEZ COMPANY WEAR UNIFORMS, THEY ALSO WEAR STREET SHOES AND ARE CLEAN SHAVEN. THIS WOULD IMPLY THAT THEY ARE PRETTY MUCH WEEKEND WARRIORS. THE RESULTS OF THE OPERATION WILL NOT BE KNOWN FOR SOME DAYS BECAUSE OF THE NEWS BLACKOUT. SUPPLIES WILL DOUBTLESS BE DISCOVERED AND SEIZED AND MANY SUSPECTS ARRESTED. THE GUERRILLAS ARE NOT LIKELY TO STAND AND FIGHT, HOWEVER, PREFERRING TO LIVE AND FIGHT ON ANOTHER DAY.
HILL

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